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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3699

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5844

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3552

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001414

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/03/2019

TAGS: PGOV SOCI KFLU TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MINISTER OF HEALTH "BANISHED" TO
OVERSEE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) USAID staff was told last week by a colleague at an international organization that the Minister of Healthcare and Medical Industry (MOHMI), Ata Serdarov, is sitting in Archman (110 km from Ashgabat) to supervise the reconstruction/renovation of the town's sanatorium. The reported "banishment" is punishment for delaying the sanatorium's reconstruction. (NOTE: This explains, in part, President Berdimuhamedov's October 14 severe reprimand of Serdarov for "shortcomings at work, loose control over the construction of healthcare facilities, and failure to provide new healthcare facilities with highly qualified personnel." END NOTE.) According to our contact, all documents awaiting the Minister's signature now are directed to Deputy Minister (Sanitary Epidemiological Service) Leyla Shamuradova. In most cases, she delays signing documents or simply sends them back unsigned, because she is not aware of details and is afraid of making mistakes. A separate MOHMI contact confirmed Shamuradova's role and approach in connection with two recent diplomatic notes requesting approval for new USAID projects. Neither note resulted in approval, but instead generated additional follow-up to be done by USAID.

¶2. (C) COMMENT: In the midst of the current flu outbreak in Turkmenistan, a public health crisis that the government continues to deny, the absence of the Minister of Health is an unfortunate indication of the government's dysfunctionality. However, given the government's absolute inability to publicly acknowledge any negative aspect of life in Turkmenistan, it's doubtful that the Minister's presence at the Ministry would make any difference. END COMMENT.

CURRAN